

R E M A R K S

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following comments. Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 2, which has subsequently been canceled. Several claims have been amended to correct or update their dependency. Claims 1 and 7 have been amended to correct an alleged informality. No new matter has been added as a result of these amendments.

As a preliminary matter, Applicant notes that the present application was filed with formal drawings. However, the Patent Office has not yet indicated whether these formal drawings are acceptable. Applicant respectfully requests notification of the acceptance or non-acceptance of the originally filed drawings with the next Communication from the Office.

The Examiner has objected to claims 1 and 7 as informal. Claims 1 and 7 have been appropriately amended, thereby resolving the issue. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection of claims 1 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Ito et al., U.S. Publication No. 2004/0034454. Applicant notes that Ito et al. is available as a 102(e) reference as of its U.S. filing date of July 1, 2003. The present application, however, claims priority to a Japanese patent document filed December 24, 2002. The priority claim was properly made upon filing of this application. Inclusion herewith of a verified English translation of the priority document perfects the priority claim. The verified English translation appears to fully support the presently claimed invention.

Thus, the present application predates the filing of the cited reference, and thus the cited reference is not available as prior art against the pending application. Applicant does not concede the correctness of the rejection. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

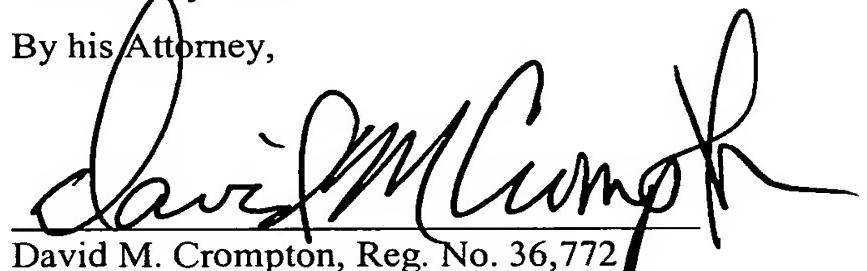
Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection of claims 2-5, 7 and 8-10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Ito et al., U.S. Publication No. 2004/0034454. As noted above, the present application predates Ito et al., and thus the reference is not available as prior art against the present invention. Applicant does not concede the correctness of the rejection. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested. It is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Issuance of a Notice of Allowance in due course is requested. If a telephone conference might be of assistance, please contact the undersigned attorney at (612) 677-9050.

Respectfully submitted,

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By his Attorney,



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Attachment: English language translation of priority document